DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 394 310 FL 023 710

AUTHOR Benson, Valerie A.
TITLE Video: A Stimulus for Dialogue Journal Writing.
PUB DATE Mar 95
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (30th, Chicago, IL, March 26-30, 1996).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; Classroom Techniques; *Dialog Journals; *English (Second Language); Error Correction; Fiction; Foreign Countries; *Journal Writing; Second Language Instruction; Teacher Student Relationship; *Videotape Recordings

ABSTRACT

This paper describes one teacher's use of a videotaped mystery series to stimulate students' entries in dialogue journals. Students are shown an episode of the mystery in class and are then asked to write a personal response to it. The aim of the journals is to enhance student confidence and writing skills. Results of an analysis of the journal entries during one year are presented. Characteristics of the interactions are discussed, with excerpts from students' entries. It is found that journal writing is advantageous because it has the qualities of good conversation, is student-generated, the writing is regular, students write to accomplish a variety of real purposes (requesting information, asking factual questions, asking clarification, expressing opinion, describing a personal problem, activating memory, describing personal events), and the writing is varied in topic, genre, and length. The video is used as a springboard for students to express their own feelings and ideas. Rather than correction, teacher response models good writing; ultimately, some students request correction. Students have received the journal writing idea with consistent enthusiasm. (Contains eight references, and several complete student entries and teacher responses are appended.) (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 394 310

Video: A Stimulus for Dialogue Journal Writing

Valerie A. Benson
Suzugamine Women's College
Hiroshima, Japan

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Valerie Benson
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

FL023710

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Video: A Stimulus for Dialogue Journal Writing

本稿は、英語教育用ビデオ教材の利用を通して英文のライティング能力を伸ばすという新しい試みに関する報告である。この「ダイアログ=ジャーナル=ライティング」と呼ばれるメソッドでは、ビデオの各章ごとに学習者はその内容についての意見・感想をジャーナルとして書き、提出し、指導者は提出されたジャーナルに返答を記し学習者へ返却することとなる。この活動によって、学習者のライティング能力の向上が図られ、同時に、英文を書くことに対しての自信も養われるのである。以下の研究報告では、このメソッドの有効性を実施例を基に検証して行く。

Abstract

The paper is a report of ongoing research concerning the viability of dialogue journal writing based on the stimulus of an ELT video. At the end of each section, the students write a personal response to that section; this in turn is responded to by the teacher. The aim of dialogue journals is to enhance the student's confidence and writing ability. There are encouraging signs that both of these aims are being accomplished.

1. Introduction

Reid (1993) has defined dialogue journals as "interactive journals in which students write entries to and for the teacher, and the teacher responds with a journal entry of his/her own" (p. 163). What is thus created is, therefore, a personalized dialogue within the larger classroom framework. Although the content of dialogue journals is often defined by mutual interests or classroom events, in

this case the dialogue journal writing was based on the general stimulus of the video course The Jericho Conspiracy (Hollett,& Baldwin,1992). Despite this apparently "defined" content, the points raised in the journals were, as we shall see, in no way restricted to The Jericho Cospiracy. Two rather unlikely teaching techniques have, therefore, been brought together: dialogue journal writing and learning by video. This is not a combination which has been tried previously, as far as can be ascertained.

The Jericho Conspiracy is an eight-episode mystery story set in Oxford, involving intrigue in big business, politics, and the academic world. It naturally brings queries to students minds about the moves made by characters in the story to introduce a new topic, change the topic, or assert a higher role relationship to the other characters. The interpersonal communication aspect of various characters, as we shall see later on, brings up various questions and opinions by the students. Also, decoding various utterances all becomes an interest and a challenge. From the cultural point of view, students may interpret the dialog according to their own cultural conventions and expectations, which may lead to misinterpretations and misunderstandings about the story. The value of dialogue journal writing lies in the open exchange of ideas that can occur, and the concern with and acceptance by the teacher of the student's writings. It also requires that both parties make substantive contributions of more or less equal length and discuss topics of mutual interest.

When I explained to the students what we were going to do they were interested in the idea and each student brought a note-

book to class the next week. All 28 students write each time. If they are absent they still write voluntarily and give it to me the next day. I encourage them to talk about the story in their writings and ask questions about it if there was something they do not understand. I told them that I would do my best to answer them, and that I would also respond to anything else they wanted to tell me. I did not suggest how long each entry should be but they are usually about 3/4 of a page.

This paper is an in-progress report of one semester of journal writing in the video classroom with second-year Junior College students at a college in Western Japan. It is not a writing course, but writing is a focus through the video that we are studying. Students write in their journal every third week, when we have completed a unit.

2. Journal Writing: Background

Journal writing is currently being used in a variety of teaching contexts and is arousing considerable interest because of its educational, social and communicative aspects. For example, in teacher training it has been described as having the following benefits:

1. Students can get help with areas of course content where they are having difficulty.
2. Journal writing helps promote autonomous learning.
3. Students gain confidence in their ability to learn, to make sense of difficult material, and to have original insights.
4. Classroom discussion becomes more productive.
5. The journal encourages students to make connections between the course content and their own teaching.

6. Journals create interaction beyond the classroom, both between teacher and student, and among students.

7. Journals make the class more process oriented. (Brinton, Holton, & Goodwin, 1993; Porter et al, 1990)

Despite being written with the preparation of teachers in mind, the above comments--with the exception, perhaps, of number five-- all apply to the language classroom. Taken together they reflect an attitude of mutual help and responsibility in which both the teacher's role and the student's role are altered from the traditional teacher-student one in significant ways. Some researchers have also found that ESL freshmen composition classes in the first language setting for international students has had a positive impact on students' writing attidudes and habits (Spack & Sadow, 1983)

Reid's (1993) comprehensive account of journal writing highlights the interactive nature of dialogue journals: "The teacher reads the entries without correcting, responding to *what* is written, not *how* it is written" (p. 163). The focus, she says, is on fluency and communication, adding that research shows that "teachers' responses are taken seriously by students, the individual attention is appreciated" (p. 163).

3. The Dialogue Journals in Action

A more specifically language teaching application of dialogue journal writing has been outlined by Kreeft, Shuy, Staton, Reed, & Morrow (1984). They feel that certain characteristics of the interaction of the nonnative English speakers becomes available. We can see this in the following set of examples:

(a) Journal writing has the qualities of good conversation.

Both the students and the teacher can choose the topics to discuss. Both can contribute equally, making comments and offering observations and opinions, requesting and giving clarification, asking and answering questions. In practice there was increased communication between the students and myself. Since most teachers do not have the opportunity of time to converse with students individually out of class, this written discourse has increased my awareness of the students' personalities immensely. Without the journal I am unlikely to know any more about these students than any of the students in my other classes. Because the student has sometimes 'revealed' something to me in their journal it can have a positive effect when teaching the class. Students can feel that they have a direct link to you and nobody else in the class knows. One student wrote in her journal ..."*Hi Mrs. Benson!. I'm fine but my husband has been to Europe for business trip sine 9th June. A cuple of day ago, when Greece has an terrible earthquake he was in Greece. I was very worried till he called next day. He sleep through it!*" This student then went on to talk about the unit in question but she talked about her personal worry first.Another student wrote *"Don't we do crossword, P14? I like solving the c crossword puzzle very much. I have already done nearly completely"* The next week we did it in class and this student kept completely quiet letting no one know what she

had written to me. Likewise, I made no reference of the written interaction.

(b) The writing is student generated.

They write about what interests them from the unit they have just seen or other topics that interest them. The teacher often also initiates topics but most often responds to and encourages the student. Therefore, the teacher essentially shares control of the writing with the students.

A concern that can come up is about confidentiality. The teacher can end up being a counselor so only the teacher can steer the journal in the direction that is comfortable if this situation arises. There can be occasions when knowing something about a student that would not come out in class can be helpful in a relationship with that student in the class. On the other hand, it can be a problem that in fact does nothing to enhance the student-teacher relationship in class but given the dialogue you are unsure of how to handle the information. It is important to maintain the student's privacy in the journal. Recently a student wrote, *"My boyfriend and I often go to love hotels.. What do you think about that Mrs V.? Have you been? My mother does not know. How can I stop her from finding out?"* I felt this was private information and not to be shared even with colleagues. I decided to speak to the student privately and invited her to my office. After a while she decided that going to love motels might not be the wisest thing for her to do

(c) The writing is regular.

Although journal writing is usually thought of as being done more often than the students in this class actually write, it is evident that students look back on what they have written and make decisions. (*Student A--I can understand this story more than before. I won't ask so many question now)* . Topics can be continued as needed; likewise they can be dropped when boredom sets in. When students are absent they become worried about how to 'catch up' "Can I come to your office and you teach me"... "What did I miss? " This is all very flattering for the teacher.

(d) The writing is functional.

Students write to accomplish a wide variety of real purposes. They might request information *(Student B--"Why does Tom dislike Gary very much?");* ask a factual question (*Do you think opera can play at a place like the Arts Center?"),*; or ask for clarification (*Student C-- Wilbury need a lot of money. How much pound to the yen now?)*; offer an opinion (*I think Celia is enigma person),*; describe a personal problem (*Megumi.-- "yesterday my pet was died. My pet was a rabbit. It was very very* sad"); or voice a complaint (*Student D--I hate people who is just thinking about moneymaking. How about you Mrs. Venson?).* Recognition/memory is often activated, as in a scene in the video in which a character in the story has a glass of orange juice (*I have been drunk American orange juice when I went to America as homestay. I can't forget the taste, it was different from Japans. Do you ever drink it Mrs. V.?)* Personal

events may be described, as in: "*I saw his Majesty the Emperor and her Majesty the Emperor near my home on Sunday. Wasn't I lucky?*).

(c) The writing is varied in terms of topic, genre, and length.

Although students have a free hand on what to write about, they are encouraged to write about the video, giving their opinions, expressing likes/dislikes about the characters as well as any other topic they might want to discuss. They often ask my opinion or want clarification of the plot or culturally unfamiliar ideas. Entries usually run to at least half a page, but regardless of length my response is the same or usually more, never less.

4. Journal Writing as Springboard

One of the revealing aspects of the dialogue journals in relation to the video is the "springboard" idea. The springboard is provided by the video, and the student then "dives" off into her own feelings or ideas. Consider the following:

Mrs. Benson,

I wonder why the man who stole Jane's bag could go away it soon: because she had a bicycle but the man didn't have it, I guess. I suppose that he had been running after her bicycle. Maybe he is good at running. By the way, I was good at running when I was a junior high school student. Now I'm not good at running and I don't like it 'cause it is so hard for me. In my opinion, running is good for healthy. Anyway, how so you think about his ability of running? And do you like to run? I want to run in the morning for my health, but it doesn't go well.

The idea of running, or perhaps jogging, was prompted by the video, and led to the student's own feelings about her desire to start running once again and become healthy. Here is an even more extreme example of the springboard idea:

Dear Venson

When I watched the video, I was very exciting. Because the tape was stolen and Jane think Metcalf stole it. Metcalf doesn't want to keep the Arts Centre.

I agree to save the ARTS CENTRE. I think ARTS CENTRE need to enjoy our life. There have many events. For instance, concerts, many ceremonies, games and so on.

Do you think that ARTS CENTRE need?

We hve several Arts Centers in Hiroshima.

Where have you been to?

By the way, Gary can play piano.

Can you play piano? I can play piano.

His cap is very pretty.

Do you think so?

Jane's hair style is short hair. I want to cut my hair.

Do you want to cut your hair?

Her pierced earrings is very pritty. I want it because I like collecting it.

Do you want, too?

Do you like collecting it?

I often listen to radio.

Do you listen to radio?

The above is from a student who is extremely shy, reminding one of the quote by Hulings, who says:

> "There are no shy students in the dialogue journal class. Reluctant speakers are amongst my most eager writers". (quoted in Peyton & Reed 1990, p. 13).

5. The Question of Correction

Although I have suggested there are many benefits to journal writing it should be remembered that it is not an intended idea that the reading and writing skills will necessarily improve. The theoretical idea is that students will most likely read more keenly when they get their journal back because they have a personal and vested interest in knowing the response that the teacher has written. Has the teacher answered the questions that were asked? What information is the teacher giving the student?

At the outset the students were told that I would not correct any of their grammar, or spelling mistakes, nor would I grade it. It was, and should be, a private dialogue between each student and myself and it would not be shared with other students in class. I would return the journal to them the next week with my response. True journal writing requires that both parties make substantive contributions of more or less equal length and discuss some topics of mutual interest (Peyton, & Reed 1990).

Nevertheless, the idea of correction remains, since the situation, after all, is a teaching one. In the entries quoted above there is still obviously a need for instruction in areas such as organization and

paragraphing. Consequently, the long-term changes, if any, in the students' writing remains one of the fascinating topics, and it will be interesting to see whether or not any of the journals show marked changes as the year progresses. It is to be hoped that the students would, of their own accord, begin to emulate the style and layout of the teacher, and would begin to produce "correct" organization in terms of paragraphs and so forth.

A major difference is that when I write my response I write across the page from left to right, not in a shopping list style as often happens with them, and I naturally indent my paragraphs. The idea is that students might notice the difference between my style and theirs and make a change. In the last journal that has been written I did suggest to a few students that perhaps it might be a good idea to indent paragraphs and arrange material so as to form "blocks" of thought, but I did not dwell on this. After all, the paramount benefit of dialogue journal writing is promoting communication between teacher and students. If this idea is not maintained the process turns into just another writing class without any of the formal benefits of a writing class. As a teacher I know that knowledge of different types of writing is important, so that the student can eventually know how to do reports, write persuasive essays and so on. The teacher of journal writing is therefore caught between the process and product aspects of the work in hand.

6. Journal Writing: A Preliminary Evaluation

This form of writing seems to suit the usually hesitant, shy and retiring Japanese student very well. As one student put it, "*In your class I talk to you more. I think it's good.*" She means through her

journal there is three-party communication - one being the paper. Somehow the student will not lose "face" with the paper between us. Also, when they talk this way they are not under the scrutiny of their classmates: It is a written conversation and it is student generated. There is a hidden discourse which does not come out weekly in class but is able to be expressed in the written discourse. I am calling it hidden because if it was verbalized in class I would clarify the situation: for example, "*Why are Tom and Gary angry with each other?*" In fact they were angry, but not with each other. This discourse was not really apparent in the scene from the video.

There has been extreme enthusiasm for journal writing in this class and interest has been very intense. Despite the fact that the English level is low intermediate and the level of this particular video is quite a challenge, all of the students are comfortable and confident because of this unique 'dialogue' that is taking place. There were very few students who I thought needed to be given some ideas on expanding their participation in journal writing. One way to to do this is by relating an experience. This could be a result of the classwork or something out of the classroom. I found students quickly picked up on this, especially with anything to do with outside of the classroom, and comments were made in the journals. For example in my response to one student I asked, "*How old do you think Celia is? Is she married? What about children?* When the student wrote the next time she picked up on this: "*suspicious character Celia is, so she can't be married or have child. To career concerned to be married*"

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

For their last journal entry this semester, I incorporated it into their class after they had done a role-play with their partner for their oral final. I thought it might be an anti-climax to start writing after a test, so I suggested that perhaps they would like to include an evaluation of themselves on their oral performance as well as writing about anything else. These are the questions I suggested they might want to think about:

1. Did you speak loudly enough?
2. How clear was your pronunciation?
3. Did you start and end your phone call appropriately?
4. Did you explain your problem clearly?
5. What would you like to do more of next semester?

I feel the journals in Appendix 1, (a), (b), (c), & (d) demonstrated a fair evaluation of their performance. A number of students said they "mumbled" because they were nervous. Other said they had done the best job that they could, which appeared to be true. Another said, *"I sometimes spoke Japanese English, didn't I?* There was no mention by any of them about their actual writing ability. I was not asked for instance, "how is my writing or how do I write better?"

7. Conclusion

When I decided to incorporate dialogue journal writing into this oral English video class I did not know what to expect or indeed if it would work at all. I wanted to include writing as part of the video course and have them do more than just write a letter to a character in the story.

I have been pleasantly surprised. All the students, even the weaker ones, are anxious to write when the time comes. I remind

them the previous week to bring their journal for the next week and rarely does a student forget. It is a quiet time, time to think and ponder for that period of time in the class.We have been studying vocabulary from the video which has enabled the students to better describe feelings, emotions and situations. Dictionaries are used a lot, and I find very few spelling mistakes. However, as for grammar, that same idea does not prevail. Sometimes when I write my response I have difficulty understanding what has been written so I will question it in my response. Then, when it comes time to write the next entry I am asked to "*please correct my poor grammar.*" I do this in a limited way, since I do not want to get away from the situation at hand, which is dialogue journal writing.

The students have developed a sense of ownership, and when we take ownership of something then we take responsibility. Questions are asked, information and opinions given and I feel that it is only through their journal that I know they have a complete grasp of this class. Because of the general hesitancy of students to speak out in class, a teacher may not be able to judge completely the thorough understanding a student has of a class. As Mohan (1991) points out, content and language instruction go hand-in-hand. He notes, "Teachers should question language teaching that ignores the content of communication and content teaching that ignores the language of communication" (p. 7).

References

Brinton, D.M., Holton, C.A., & Goodwin, J.M. (1993). *TESOL Journal,* 2 (4), 15-19.

Hollet, V & Baldwin, R. (1992). *The Jericho conspiracy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kreeft, J., Shuy, R.W., Staton, J., Reed, L., & Morroy, R. (1984) *Dialog writing: Analysis of student-teacher interactive writing in the learning of English as a second language* (National Institute of Education Grant No. NIE-G-83-030) Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 252 097).

Mohan, B.A. (1991) The integration of language and content: Recent research issues. *The Language Teacher,* 15 (11), 6-8 Tokyo, Japan.

Peyton, J. K., & Reed, L. (1990). *Dialogue journal writing with nonnative English speakers: A handbook for teachers.* Alexandria, VA: TESOL.

Porter, P. A. , Goldstein, L. M., Leatherman, J., & Conrad, S. (1990). An ongoing dialogue: Learning logs for teacher preparation. In J. C. Richards & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education* (pp. 227-240). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reid, J. M. (1993). *Teaching ESL writing.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Regents/Prentice Hall.

Spack, R., & Sadow, C. (1983) Student-teacher working journals in ESL freshman composition. *TESOL Quarterly,* 17, 575-593.

Appendix 1 (a)

Journal Entry: Student:

Dear Ms. Venson,

Hi, What's new? Recently it's humid, isn't it? Maybe you feel bad. So do I. Also I have a lot of Final Exam. By the way, todays, performance was terrible. That's my fault. It was not enough practice with my partner. I'm afraid you feel sad. So sorry. I think I didn't speak loudly enough. Its because I have no confidence. Secondly, my pronunciation was too bad. Especially, "inherited" and "evasion" is hard for me. Otherwise, it's not fluently and not natural speaking on the phone. Thirdly, I think I started phone call well but it maybe small voice, I hesited a little bit. Finally, if I can do next semester, I would like to speak more loudly and clearly. I of course will practice harder than last time. Don't hesitate and confident. I learned many things in this semester. It was useful. For example, I learned about the importance of thinking. Everytime I had to think when I watched the video. So I would like to keep going about everything.

Response: Teacher

Dear Student A:

Yes, it is humid but I do like hot weather so in Japan that means it is going to be humid and hot in the summer.

Your pronunciation was not as bad as you thought it was but I could tell that you both had not practiced sufficiently. Shame on you! Unfortunately, this situation gave you less confidence, hence the small voice, so next semester let us really practice and expand the ideas that you have written about.

How do you feel about doing your oral test in front of the class instead of in my office? Is it more or less pressure for you? Let me know what you think.

How would you like to have Celia as a boss? Do you think she would be moody? For myself, I think she knows her job very well but I would not be very keen to work for her.

What are you going to do this summer? See you in October.

Appendix 1 (b)

Journal Entry: Student

Dear Benson

I was very excited this morning.
It was interested in conversation so I enjoyed it.
I did Nancy (Jane's friend in Australia). I thought she is very kind.
I spoke loudly. Did you hear my voice? I think you did.
But I mistook pronunciation of A$1400,000. I Practiced pronunciation hard. Was my pronounce good? I thought I could do very well. Our phone call was natural I think.
I have never called in English, so it was difficult for us.
By the way, why did Metcalf change his name in 1988?
I want to know his name before change.
Have a nice summer.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Resonse: Teacher

Dear B.

I could hear you very well from where I was sitting. Your pronunciation is improving but try not to speak so fast, give yourself time to pronounce the words. Many students mispronounced A$1400,000. so don't feel alone.

I am afraid I don't know what Metcalf's name was before he changed it. The book does not tell us the answer to that question. What name do you think suits him?

How did you like doing your oral final in front of the class instead of my office? Please let me know.

Appendix 1 (c)

Journal Entry: Student

I think I speak loudly and my pronunciation was almost good. But sometimes I spoke Japanese English, didn't I? When we had better more longer greetings I could explain what I wanted well enough. Because we studied hard for examination. Next semester, I wanto speak more naturally and I am going to attend this class. I was absent from this class two times because I teached English at a junior high school. I think today's test was good.

Response: Teacher

Dear Student C:

Yes, you did speak some Japanese English! I wonder what Nancy thought of it. Next semester let us try and stop that . I know you can do better.

You could not help being absent for your teaching practice and I think you caught up O.K.

What are you going to do this summer?

Appendix 1 (d)

Journal Entry: Student

This morning I little nervous but I could speak loudly in this conversation and I paid attention to "r"s pronunciation so almost good I think.

When I start my phone call I talked about recently situation of each other so I could get well know with each other.

Before the test I studied and researched into this story so I could explain what I wanted well.

Next semester I want to study conversation hard and speak more fluently.

Response: Teacher

Dear Student D:

Thanks for your comments. You were one of the few who did pay attention to the "r"s! I think you explained your part well but you did not give Nancy much time to respond to you. Also, you shouted down the phone! Speaking louder does not necessarily make it easier to be understood. Try and remember this for the next time.

How did you feel about doing your oral final in front of the class instead of in my office? Let me know what you think.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE